

Focus on Ebooks!

BY
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Report From the Frankfurt Book Fair

In a decade-long struggle to grasp a foothold, ebooks are finally coming of age in libraries of all kinds. That's what vendor after vendor told me at the Frankfurt Book Fair in mid-October when I went in search of this ebooks update story.

Though the ebook's past may have been one of false hopes and nonstarts, according to all accounts, it was the adoption of the ebook standard that seems to have been the magic factor in the delicate ebook deployment and adoption equation.

EPUB Standard Fuels Ebook Title Growth

Since the coming a year ago of the XML-based EPUB standard, more and more publishers have released more and more titles until a critical mass has finally been achieved. Title availability is now fueling library up-

take, which has also been driven by end-user demand for the format. End-user demand, of course, hasn't been hurt by the proliferation of ebook readers including the Sony Reader and Amazon's Kindle.

At Frankfurt, a "digital lunch" was held in honor of the success of ebooks, "the fastest growing segment of the book publishing market." At the lunch, a panel was convened comprising some of the key movers and shakers in getting the ebook ball rolling, including Michael Smith, executive director of International Digital Publishing Forum, which published the EPUB standard, and Steve Potash, CEO of OverDrive, the first ebook distributor to adopt the standard.

Speaking at the lunch, Smith told a group of publishers, "Don't wait, the market is starting to boom." As proof, he cited an Association of American Publishers (AAP) study that showed

sales of ebooks in August 2008 were up 82.9% compared to August 2007, and sales were up 53% for the year between August 2007 and August 2008.

Because the EPUB standard is XML-based, books captured in or converted to this standard can be displayed on a variety of devices, thus lowering the cost to publishers to make their titles available as ebooks, and it's to that factor that the current success of the medium is attributed.

"With conversion costs coming down, publishers have this opportunity now to make more titles available and you want the customer to find exactly what they want," Smith said.

With regard to the driving force of the new ebook readers now flooding the market, Smith noted, "In the first three months since its release in mid-July (2008), over 2 million EPUB files have been delivered by Feedbooks.com to the Stanza reader for the iPhone."

Tailor Your Plan

- **Name your price.** Many pricing options are available, ranging from complete packaged collections to one-off title sales. You'll need to search for the plan that's right for you.
- **Select your format(s).** PDF, interestingly enough, seems to be the prevalent format for packages going to research libraries and corporate enterprises, though some services offer formats compatible with popular ebook readers, including Adobe Digital Editions (computer software), Sony Reader, iPhone/Stanza, BlackBerry/Mobi, Amazon/Kindle, and so on.
- **Look outside the box.** And don't forget about the biggest ebook collection of them all—Google Book Search. As you may know, Google has partnered with OCLC on Library Catalog Search, which can help you find local copies of the books discovered in a Google ebook search.
- **Keep an eye on Amazon.com.** Some think Amazon's Kindle reader may be the next best thing to the combination of iTunes with the iPod. Amazon's strategy of making ebooks easy to obtain and use by consumers could well set the user expectation for library services in the future.



Ebooks.com managing director Stephen Cole took time from his busy schedule to discuss with me his company's library strategy.



Though it's been observed lately that Google no longer attends library shows, its representatives were in full force at Frankfurt to promote the benefits of Google Book Search to publishers.

Smith was not alone in singing the ebook's praises.

In an official release, Frankfurt Book Fair organizers reported record attendance for the fair of nearly 300,000 visitors and 7,373 exhibitors. The high attendance was driven, they said, by "the new business models and fields of business driven by digitization." Of the exhibitors, 353 categorized themselves as ebook vendors in the fair's official catalog.

Pricing Options Abound for Library Collections

I spoke with Stephen Cole, managing director of Ebooks Corp., about the trends.

He told me his firm alone now offers 160,000 titles, "growing at 40,000 per year."

"It's all happened over the last two years and not just for us," he said. "Ebooks have gone over the hill. They have been adopted by both consumers

and libraries, with no significant signs of slowing."

Ebooks Corp. is one of several leading vendors in the arena, offering both a consumer service (Ebooks.com) and an academic library lending service, EBL (Ebook Library) with a collection that focuses on STM, professional, and humanities titles. Ebooks Corp.'s platform, eb20 reader, was also recently adopted by Cambridge University Press as a distribution system for its own set of titles.

Not only are a wider and wider array of ebook titles becoming available, but so are an increasing number of library purchasing models.

Cole described what he called his company's "flexible pricing program," but it sounded to me like a dizzying array of pricing options for libraries buying into the program.

He said the flexibility was all about finding ways "to provide a set of options for giving libraries and their patrons accessibility while not bankrupting the publishers."

One option from EBL is a model called "nonlinear lending." The nonlinear approach might involve a library buying, say, 325 uses a year for a particular book. When the 326th user

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Ebooks in Your Reference Library: Highlights From a Fast Tour of the Frankfurt Book Fair

If you're thinking of adding ebooks to your library's reference collection or expanding the current list of ebook titles for professionals in your enterprise, here are some of your options.

Go Direct to the Publisher

Among the leading research and reference publishers offering ebook collections are these:

- **Cambridge University Press Cambridge eBook Collections** (<http://Cambridge.org/aus/eCollections>): Collections are sold as complete subject sets, with a one-time payment for perpetual access.
- **Elsevier Books on Science Direct** (www.sciencedirect.com): Buy a collection or pick and choose individual books.
- **Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC) RSC eBook Collection** (www.rsc.org/publishing/ebooks): Entire list of titles is sold as a set with backfile.
- **Springer eBook Collection** (www.springer.com/ebooks): Offers its full collection, including subject-based collections.
- **Taylor & Francis eBook Collection** (www.ebooks.subscriptions.com): Sold title by title or by preselected subject packages (50-title minimum); encyclopedias are also available, including titles from CRCnetBASE.
- **Wiley InterScience Wiley Online Books** (<http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/browse/?type=BOOK>): There is a one-time fee, lease to buy.

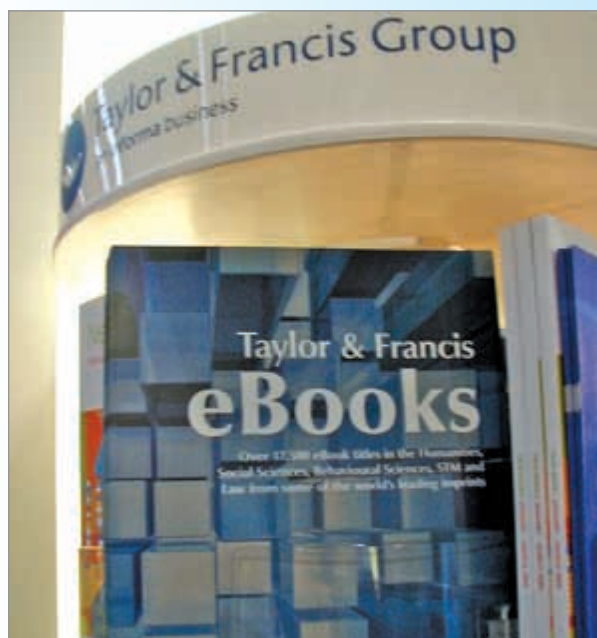
And many more ...

Or Go Via Your Favorite Distributor

- **Baker & Taylor** (www.ybp.com): Through its YBP Library Services division, it offers access to 300,000 electronic items, some in partnership with ebrary, NetLibrary, and EBL.
- **Blackwell** (www.blackwell.com/librarian_resources/echo_resources): Offers the ECHO eBook Platform using ebrary's proprietary technology. Attempting to be a one-stop shop, it offers access to 220 "of the world's leading academic, STM and professional publishers," incorporating eBooks.com's EBL collection and ebooks on ebrary's proprietary platform. The software features a collection management component and MARC records retrieval.
- **EBSCO** (www.ebsco.com): Offers Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley InterScience, Books on ScienceDirect, Cambridge Companions Online, Springer Online Archives, 60 collections in all.
- **eBooks.com** (www.ebooks.com): Offers Cambridge University Press, Oxford University Press, Elsevier, Kluwer, Springer, Taylor & Francis, World Scientific, and many others. Also distributed through Blackwell.
- **ebrary** (www.ebrary.com/corp): Available on ebrary's proprietary reader; Academic Complete package includes 38,000 titles including CABI, Kluwer, McGraw-Hill, Taylor & Francis, World Scientific, SAGE, Emerald, and many university presses.

It also provides business and engineering collections for the enterprise. Also distributed through Blackwell.

- **Ingram Digital** (www.ingramdigital.com): Offers Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, McGraw-Hill, Springer, Elsevier, Pearson, and Greenwood, along with exclusive intergovernmental agency collections of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), U.S. Department of Defense, World Health Organization, and International Marine Organization. Ingram's MyiLibrary service integrates with your OPAC.
- **NetLibrary** (OCLC; <http://library.netlibrary.com/library.aspx>): Offers 170,000 ebooks via a proprietary platform. Offerings include a core medical library ebook collection and special collections for school, public, and academic libraries. Also available through Baker & Taylor.
- **OverDrive** (www.overdrive.com): First to deliver titles according to the EPUB ebook standard, it offers 100,000-plus titles to public libraries, school libraries, and academic libraries. Publishers include Oxford University Press, Cambridge University Press, McGraw-Hill, Wiley, Taylor & Francis, Pearson, DK, and so on.
- **Swets** (www.swets.com): Offers Cambridge University Press, Elsevier, Greenwood, McGraw-Hill, Pearson, Springer, Taylor & Francis, Wiley-Blackwell, and others via Ingram's MyiLibrary service. Other titles can be purchased for direct-from-publisher delivery, including many of the above plus SAGE, IOS Press, and World Scientific.



Among the publishers promoting their ebook collections was Taylor & Francis, boasting a collection of more than 17,500 titles.

Print on Demand

Whoever said “print is dead” has not been to the Frankfurt Book Fair. While I was there, it was hard not to notice that nearly 100,000 locals arrived to scarf up books and newspapers.

I even ran into two young men exhibiting at the show who launched a business based on transforming wiki pages into on-demand printed reference volumes. Starting with Wikipedia a year ago, they announced a deal on travel editions with WikiTravel (<http://wikitravelpress.com/blog>) at the Book Fair.



Volker Haas (left), senior developer, and Johannes Beigel (right), lead developer, PediaPress, Mainz, Germany

Porting the web over to print? What will they think of next? Actually, it's a great idea.

If you're researching something on the web, wouldn't it be nice to have your sources gathered into a little volume that you could flip through, underline, dog-ear, lateral file, and refer to when challenged? And how good would it be to order a printed snapshot of your own website once in a while, if not for posterity then for regulatory and compliance purposes?

Scrapbookers, genealogists, conspiracy theorists ... who wouldn't want a print-out of their web resources?

And what about all those saved ink cartridges that you probably can't afford to buy anymore anyway?

comes along, then an order for a second copy is triggered. “It feels like unlimited access,” he said, “because there can be many concurrent users of a book, but it



About the Frankfurt Book Fair

In its 60th year, the Frankfurt Book Fair (www.book-fair.com/en) is the biggest book fair in the world, attracting publishers, agents, and the general public. Attendance was up this year, and enthusiasm was high for digital content. A survey conducted by the organizers among 1,000 industry professionals from more than 30 countries revealed that 40% of respondents believe that econtent will overtake traditional book sales as early as 2018. (A third said it will never happen! And 60% confessed they do not use ebook readers or ebooks at all.) Anyone attending the fair on the weekend when the public arrived—more than 100,000 showed up with shopping bags and push trolleys to carry home their purchases—would have to wonder if print can possibly be dead.

reflects the real world multi-copy environment” and pinpoints titles where demand is high enough to warrant the additional copy expense.

Cole also spoke of EBL's “demand driven acquisition” model, in which the library might display in its OPAC the entire Ebooks collection of, say, 100,000 titles, though they may have only bought access to a couple thousand titles. If a book is opened that is not on the list of purchased titles, and if it remains open for 5 minutes, then an order is automatically submitted. Cole described this model as giving a library the ability to “calibrate its collection based on actual patron demand.”

Other options include chapter sales, the ability to support virtual course packs (which EBL's website refers to as “virtual photocopying”), and something Cole called “short-term rentals,” a pay-per-use model.

All in all, the options and opportunities for launching or expanding your library's ebook offerings would seem to be plenty 1 year following the EPUB standard release and its quick adoption.

In Frankfurt I focused my limited time on the sources for research and professional and reference collections, and I was pleasantly surprised at how many publishers and distributors are involved.



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